

# ANNUAL REPORT

## OF THE

# MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

### for the Year ended December 31st, 1946.

To Thetford Urban District Council.

Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year 1946 as follows :—

#### SECTION A.—STATISTICS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE AREA.

Area—7,096 acres.

Registrar-General's estimation of the population at mid year—4,344.

Number of inhabited houses according to the rate book—1294.

Rateable value—£18,656.

Sum represented by a penny rate—£76 15s 9d.

The area is partly urban and partly rural. In the urban area the industries include: Patent Pulp Manufacturing, malting, fruit canning, the preparation of coffee and motor engineering. The rural area provides general estate work and chemical manure manufacturing. Sugar beet and forestry provide employment in season. The R.A.O.C. repair centre set up during the war was closed down at the end of the year, but it is understood that further industry will take its place on the same premises.

During this first post-war year fresh paint has brightened the appearance of many of the buildings, but there remains a great deal of poor house property, mainly in Pike Lane, Castle Row, St. Mary's Row, Abbey Green, Painter Street and St. Nicholas St. Much of this property is becoming overcrowded as it did at the end of the first World War due to the return of the service men who have married and even have a family and are now doubling up in the parents homes. Towards the end of the year a start was made on the building of an inadequate number of new houses to relieve this situation.

During the year there was a very heavy rain fall and in the autumn some freak storms heavily overloaded the surface drains of the town. This caused considerable dampness in the many old chalk built houses which are constructed with no damp-proof course.

The sanitary state of the town remains in its extremely antiquated and precarious position. Conclusive evidence of the need for a water carriage system of sewage in the town was given by your sanitary inspector and myself to an inspector, Mr. J. Gardner, appointed by the Minister of Health to enquire into the sanitary state of the town on 4th September. The inspector averred that he had never heard of a case of greater necessity.

#### Vital Statistics.

Live Births.				Total:	M.	F.	
	Legitimate	...	...	90	39	51	Birth Rate per 1,000 of the population
	Illegitimate	...	...	15	6	9	—24.12.
Still Births	...	...	...	1	1	Nil.	Rate per 1,000 births—9.52.
Deaths	...	...	...	59	31	28	Death rate per 1,000 of the population
							—13.58

Death from Puerperal causes (Headings 29 and 30 of the Registrar General's short list)—

No. 29 Puerperal Sepsis	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.
No. 30 Other Puerperal causes	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.
Total	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.

Death Rate of Infants under one year :—

All infants per 1,000 live-births	...	...	...	...	...	57.14
Legitimate per 1,000 legitimate live births	...	...	...	...	...	66.66
Illegitimate per 1,000 illegitimate live births	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.

Deaths from Cancer (all ages)	...	...	...	...	...	11
„ „ Measles (all ages)	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.
„ „ Whooping Cough (all ages)	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.
„ „ Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age)	...	...	...	...	...	1

These figures are consistent with those found for the town in the past few years. The birth rate is high that found for England and Wales being 19.1 per 1,000. But it is an expected post-war rise due to the return of servicemen and new marriages. It is noted that there is a considerable increase in female births over male births which has been observed previously in a post-war period. There are a larger number of illegitimate births this year, but there is a nil infant mortality among them which is satisfactory.

The death rate is consistent with that usually found in the town; that found for England and Wales being 11.5 per 1,000. There is a high age incidence: 4 persons being over 90 years of age and 30 over 70 years of age. The causes of death were: heart disease in 24 cases, cancer in 11 cases, apoplexy caused 4 deaths and tuberculosis caused 3 deaths. There was an unfortunate rise in the infant mortality, 5 cases occurred in the neo natal period (up to 1 month of age). These deaths were due to prematurity. The remaining two deaths were due to a congenital abnormality not consistent with life and an accidental suffocation. There was only one still birth which puts the still birth rate for the town at well below that current in England and Wales of .53 per 1,000 of the population. There was a nil maternal mortality. This figure is being reduced over the whole country very satisfactorily, mainly I think since the introduction of the more powerful and less toxic antiseptics such as dettol, and the development of such drugs as the sulphoramides (M & B 693 etc.) and penicillin.

During the year the health of the community as a whole has been good. A very wet summer keeping the dust down prevented the usual incidence of mid-year tonsillitis and non-specific enteric infections. The incidence of infectious disease among the child population was low. But in the latter half of the year there were some cases of infectious hepatitis or catarrhal jaundice, which is now a notifiable disease. One case of rickets, a rare disease in these days, was observed in the infant welfare clinic. The case made an uneventful recovery on vitamin D therapy.

At the end of the year the National Health Service Act 1946 became law.

## **SECTION B.—GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE AREA.**

### **1. (1). Personnel.**

**M.O.H.** part time who is also Medical Officer to the Infant Welfare Clinic.

**Sanitary Inspector**, part time, Royal Sanitary Institute.

**Health Visitor**, who acts as Nurse to the Infant Welfare Clinic, C.M.B., R.S.I., Health Visitors examination. R.S.I. Maternity and Child Welfare Certificate.

**District Nurse**, S.R.N., S.C.M.

**Town Midwife**, S.R.N., S.C.M.

### **(2). Health Services—No change.**

### **3. Maternity and Child Welfare.**

This work which in the past has been carried out by the Thetford and District Maternity and Child Welfare Association was taken over by the Norfolk County Council as local Maternity and Child Welfare Authority under powers given in the Public Health Act 1936.

I would like to say here that the town is deeply indebted to the Association for the fine work it has done and especially indebted to those ladies who have voluntarily worked to keep the Association alive for over 25 years. The result of the Association's work have been: a nil maternal mortality over all these years among Thetford Mothers and the extremely low infant mortality. This is a very fine record to hand over to the County Council. I am glad to say that the County Council has intimated that it wishes the Association to remain in being, though with greatly reduced powers of action. I would recommend you to support any contention of this body which is so closely in contact with the infant and maternity affairs of the Borough.

Under the new arrangements the expectant mother engages the Midwife who has at her command arrangements of Ante-Natal, Post-Natal and dental services with the assistance of the mother's own family Doctor when required; he in his turn has command of specialist consultations and treatment, he does not attend the confinement unless the Midwife finds that she is unable to manage it herself when she is empowered to call him in. The Ante-Natal and Post-Natal clinics have been abolished, and so has the treatment clinic at St. Barnabas Hospital. The work of these clinics is carried to the individual mother by the nurse and the Doctor. The success of this scheme depends primarily on the conscientiousness of the nurse and then on the doctor concerned. The area covered by the district Midwife includes Kilverstone and Croxton since the retirement of Nurse Sowels from active midwifery. The Midwife is not provided with a car but she may charge her expenses for car hire; but under present conditions this is unsatisfactory for night emergencies.



Health visiting and the Infant Welfare Clinics have remained under the original arrangements, Nurse Sowels having been retained temporarily as Health Visitor and Nurse to the Clinics. The main difficulty has been to find premises in which to hold the clinics. When the Old Maltings were derequisitioned the water and central heating were cut off and we were then indebted to the Salvation Army for permission to hold the Clinics in their Children's Hall. Later when the Maltings were taken over by the Norfolk Education Committee as a youth centre, an equitable arrangement was arrived at for continuing to hold the clinics there. But it is unsatisfactory that there is no permanent Clinic.

#### 4. **Nursing Homes.**

These are administered by the Norfolk County Council. But I would like it to be noted that the Borough has two private Nursing Homes which take Midwifery and general types of cases from well beyond the local administrative area, which relieves the general nursing shortage to some extent. The position of these institutions under the National Health Service Act 1946 is in complete obscurity. But I would recommend the retention in the Borough of such institutions as they bring business to the town.

### **SECTION C—SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.**

#### 1. (1) **Water.**

No extensions to the Public Water supply were carried out during the year.

(a) A sample of water was submitted to the Public Analyst for Chemical and Bacteriological examination and was reported upon as follows :—

“This water is a pure and wholesome water supply of excellent organic and bacteriological quality, with moderate mineral content.. It remains very constant from year to year. The water is eminently suitable for drinking and general domestic purposes.”

(b) There is a very adequate supply and at no time was there any shortage.

The number of houses supplied with a piped water supply number 1,270.

The only houses not supplied are these at a long distance from the town and which are situated in the rural fringe of the area.

#### (2) **Drainage and Sewage.**

There have been no alterations or extensions of this service during the year.

#### 2. **Rivers and Streams.**

No action has been taken during the year.

#### 3. (1) **Closet Accomodation.**

The only change has been the conversion of 6 vaults to pails and 4 vaults to W.C's.

This alteration gives :—

W.C.'s. 316 Pails 651, Vaults 353.

#### (2) **Public Cleansing.**

The collection of refuse remains the same as in previous years.

#### (3) **Sanitary Inspection of the Area.**

The report of the Sanitary Inspector is as follows :—

No. of inspections for general nuisances	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	307
No. of informal notices served	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	27
No. of statutory notices served	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
No. of nuisances abated as a result of informal notices served	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	25
No. of nuisances abated as a result of statutory notices served	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
No. in hand at the end of the year	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2

#### (4) **Shops and Offices.**

General routine inspections carried out.

### **SECTION D—HOUSING.**

Limited housing routine inspections have been carried out during the year.

Observation has been made of the progress of the 40 new houses being built adjacent to the present St. Mary's Estate.

### **SECTION E—Milk Supply.**

(a) As in previous years samples were taken and tested by lactometer.

#### (b) **Meat and other foods.**

A fair amount of meat and other foods have been examined during the year resulting in the following being condemned as unfit for human consumption :—Carcase Beef 701 lbs., Carcase Pork 18 lbs., Cheese 49 lbs., Semolina 36 lbs., Corned Beef 169 lbs., Pork Pies 260, Fruit Cake 251 lbs., Fish 218 lbs., Dried Figs 16 lbs., Parsnips 5 Cwts., and 165 Tins of various foods.

## SECTION F—PREVALENCE OF AND CONTROL OF INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES.

There has been little infectious disease in the town this year. A few cases of Measles were notified in the early quarters followed by rather more cases of Whooping Cough in the summer. Jaundice was being notified throughout the year but most of the cases occurred in the autumn. One case of Scarlet Fever was notified and sent to the Fever Hospital where the diagnosis was corrected to a severe streptococcal infection. There were 5 cases of Erysipelas, (another type of streptococcal infection). There were no cases of Puerperal Fever or Ophthalmia Neonatorum. Two cases of Malaria were notified in men who had returned from service overseas.

Protective Inoculation against Diphtheria continues to be carried out vigorously in the Borough, and the percentage of protected children is satisfactory. It is now recommended that protection should be completed before the age of one year and that further small inoculations be given at the ages of 5 years, 10 years and on leaving school to ensure continuous immunity.

### Notifications.

Disease.	Total Cases notified.	No. admitted to Hospital.	Deaths.
Pneumonia	5	nil	nil
Scarlet Fever	1	nil	nil
Measles	16	nil	nil
Whooping Cough	34	nil	nil
Erysipelas	5	nil	nil
Malaria	2	nil	nil
Jaundice	31	nil	nil

### Tuberculosis.

Age Periods.	New Cases.				Deaths.			
	Respiratory.		Non-Respiratory.		Respiratory.		Non-Respiratory.	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
5	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
15	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
25	2	2	1	—	2	—	—	—
55	1	3	—	—	—	1	—	—
65	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	3	5	4	—	2	1	—	—

In conclusion I must record my appreciation of the work done by your Sanitary Inspector and my thanks to him for his help during the year.

I remain, Gentleman,

Your obedient Servant,

*J. L. Pinner*  
Medical Officer of Health.

Thetford,  
27th October, 1947.